

Montana/Dakotas BLM

Fire Incident Management Team Tips for Fires in Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat

2013

The states of Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota contain around 10 million acres of sage-grouse habitat and over 1,000 leks, which account for about 19 percent of the known male population of greater sage-grouse. The BLM manages 27 percent of the high quality breeding and nesting habitat across this area. To conserve this habitat during a fire, priority protection areas have been identified. Several policy documents, Best Management Practices and strategies have been developed. Here are the highlights as they apply to IMTs:

- After protecting life and communities, sagebrush habitat is the top priority.
- The priority protection maps change and the local unit may have slightly different priority areas than what shows in WFDSS or on the web.
- Work closely with line officers to ensure sage-grouse issues are addressed throughout the WFDSS process (particularly in decision documents) and specified in delegations of authority.
- Fully engage the sage-grouse Resource Advisor (READ); they can provide the latest maps. Order more READs if necessary.
- To the extent possible, locate wildfire suppression facilities (i.e., base camps, spike camps, drop points, staging areas, heli-bases) in areas where physical disturbance to sage-grouse habitat can be minimized. These include disturbed areas, grasslands, near roads/trails or in other areas where there is existing disturbance or minimal sagebrush cover.
- Minimize unnecessary cross-country vehicle travel during fire operations in sage-grouse habitat.
- Minimize burnout operations in key sage-grouse habitat areas by constructing direct fireline whenever safe and practical to do so.
- Utilize retardant and mechanized equipment to minimize burned acreage.
- As safety allows, conduct mop-up where the black adjoins unburned islands, dog legs, or other habitat features to minimize sagebrush loss.
- Power-wash all firefighting vehicles, to the extent possible, including engines, water tenders, personnel vehicles, and ATVs prior to deploying in or near sage-grouse habitat areas to minimize noxious weed spread.
- Repair suppression damage to the extent possible.
- Assist READs as possible in developing preliminary recommendations for ESR, and prioritize any projects you implement to (1) maintain and enhance unburned intact sagebrush habitat when at risk from adjacent threats; (2) stabilize soils; (3) reestablish hydrologic function; (4) maintain and enhance biological integrity; (5) promote plant resiliency; (6) limit expansion or dominance of invasive species; and (7) reestablish native species.

Policy Links:

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/regulations/Instruction_Memos_and_Bulletins/national_instruction/2012/IM_2012-043.html (Latest Instruction Memorandum)

<http://www.nifc.gov/PUBLICATIONS/redbook/2012/Chapter02.pdf> (Red Book, pg. 2-43)

<http://web.blm.gov/internal/wo-500/directives/dir-11/im2011-138.html> (Internal BLM page)

<http://web.blm.gov/internal/fire/fpfm/sg/index.html> (Internal BLM Fire Operations page with maps)

